

TAPE DRIVE APPARATUS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present document is based on Japanese Priority
5 Application JP2002-358579, filed in the Japanese Patent Office
on December 10, 2002, the contents of which being
incorporated herein by reference to the extent permitted by
law.

10 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001]

1. Field of the present invention

The present invention relates to a helical scan type tape
drive apparatus adapted so that tape is drawn out of a
15 cartridge accommodating the tape serving as a recording
medium, that the drawn tape is caused to run in such a way as
to be wound onto a tape takeup reel provided in a drive
apparatus body, and that the tape drawn out of the cartridge is
wound around a rotary head drum so that signals are recorded
20 thereon and reproduced therefrom. More particularly, the
present invention relates to a mechanism for detecting dew
condensation on the rotary head drum.

[0002]

25 2. Description of the Related Art

There has been widely practiced a recording/reproducing
apparatus of the helical scan type that records and reproduces
signals by drawing tape, which serves as a recording medium,
out of a cartridge in which the tape is accommodated, and by
30 winding this tape around a rotary head drum.

In recent years, for recoding/reproducing apparatuses of

such kind, there has been proposed a tape drive apparatus using what is called a single reel type cartridge (see, for example, Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2002-237117).

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[0004]

In other words, the single reel type cartridge used in this tape drive apparatus is adapted to accommodate only one tape supply reel, around which a tape serving as a recording
10 medium is wound. At the drive apparatus body, tape is drawn out of the tape supply reel when this cartridge is inserted therein. This tape is carried in such a way as to be wounded by a tape takeup reel provided in the drive apparatus body. Thus, the tape drive apparatus operates such that tape
15 running is performed in this manner.

[0005]

An outline of a conventional tape drive apparatus of such kind is described hereinbelow with reference to FIG. 14 to
20 FIG. 16.

FIG. 14 shows an entire configuration of the tape drive apparatus. In an apparatus body 1 of this tape drive apparatus, a section, in which a cartridge 4 is mounted, and a
25 tape takeup reel 6 are disposed on a base chassis 2 so that a rotary head drum 3 is interposed therebetween.

[0006]

A tape supply reel 5 is rotatably accommodated in a
30 cartridge 4, around which tape serving as a recording medium (or magnetic tape) is wound. A carrying mechanism 7 for

drawing tape from the tape supply reel 5 provided in the cartridge 4 and for carrying the tape to the tape takeup reel 6 is placed between the section, in which this cartridge 4 is mounted, and the tape takeup reel 6.

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[0007]

This carrying mechanism 7 is constructed on a subplate 8 fixed onto an upper section of the apparatus body 1. That is, on this subplate 8, a guide shaft 9 is provided in such a way as
10 to extend over the section, in which this cartridge 4 is mounted, and the tape takeup reel 6. A chucking mechanism 10 is provided on this guide shaft 9 in such a manner as to be able to move therealong. This chucking mechanism 10 is connected to a feed belt 12 driven by a motor 11. That is, this carrying
15 mechanism 7 has a structure in which the feed belt 12 is driven by the motor 11 thereby to move the chucking mechanism 10 along the guide shaft 9.

[0008]

20 A chucking member to be engaged with a leader block 13 (see FIG. 15) attached to an end of tape T is mounted on this chucking mechanism 10. When the cartridge 4 is mounted on the apparatus body 1, this chucking member engages with and chucks the leader block 13. Then, the motor 11 drives the
25 chucking mechanism 10 from this status, so that the chucking mechanism 10 is moved from the side of the cartridge 4 toward the tape takeup reel 6. Thus, the leader block 13 is carried along a guide groove 14 formed in the subplate 8. Consequently, the tape T is drawn out of the cartridge 4 and
30 carried to a position where the tape T is wound up by the tape takeup reel 6.

[0009]

Thus, the leader block 13 carried by the carrying mechanism 7 is fixed to the tape takeup reel 6 in a status in which the leader block 13 is fitted into a central section of the tape takeup reel 6 from a lead-in groove 15 as shown in FIGS. 15 and 16. Thereafter, a tape winding mechanism operates, so that the tape T is wound around the rotary head drum 3 by tape winding members 16 and 17.

[0010]

These tape winding members 16 and 17 have guide rollers 20 and 21 and inclined guide posts 22 and 23 on movement plates 18 and 19, respectively. The movement plates 18 and 19 are adapted to be moved to positions shown in FIG. 15 and FIG. 16, respectively. Thus, the guide rollers 20 and 21 and the inclined guide posts 22 and 23 draw the tape T, so that the tape T is wound around the rotary head drum 3 at an angle (about 200 degrees) set to be within a predetermined range. Incidentally, the movement plates 18 and 19 of these tape winding members 16 and 17 are adapted to be moved along guide grooves 24 and 25 provided in both sides of the rotary head drum 3, respectively, as shown in FIG. 14.

[0011]

Reference numerals 26, 27, 28, and 29 designate guide rollers. Along with winding of the tape T around the rotary head drum 3, these guide rollers are moved from a position shown in FIG. 15 to a position shown in FIG. 16. Thus, a predetermined tape path is formed. Reference numeral 30 denotes a tension regulator. This tension regulator 30 has a

roller 33 provided at a tip end of an arm 32 that is turned around a shaft 31 serving as a fulcrum. During a status in which the tape T is wound around the rotary head drum 3 as shown in FIG. 16, the roller 33 of this tension regulator 30 is brought into rolling contact with the tape T by a force of a spring (not shown). Thus, predetermined tension is given to the tape T.

[0012]

Thus, the tape takeup reel 6 is rotation-driven thereby to wind up the tape T, which has been wound around the rotary head drum 3, onto the tape takeup reel 6, thus the tape T runs and at the same time the rotary head drum 3 is rotation-driven. Thus, a signal is recorded onto or reproduced from the tape T.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0013]

Meanwhile, in the case of using the helical scan type recording/reproducing apparatus adapted to perform recoding/reproducing by winding tape around the rotary head drum, dew condensation may occur on the rotary head drum when the apparatus is disposed at a place that is subject to high temperature and high humidity.

In the case that dew condensation occurs on this rotary head drum, when the tape is wound therearound, the tape is stuck thereonto and disabled to run. Therefore, it is necessary to preliminarily and accurately detect dew condensation so as to control tape winding operation.

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[0014]

Hitherto, a system including a dew condensation sensor, which is placed in the vicinity of this rotary head drum and adapted to indirectly detect a status thereof, has been used as a conventional means for detecting dew condensation on the
5 rotary head drum.

[0015]

However, this conventional system adapted to indirectly detect dew condensation on the rotary head drum by using
10 such a sensor has drawbacks in that the sensor takes time to detect dew condensation, and that thus a current dew condensation status of the rotary head drum cannot be accurately detected.

15 Additionally, the conventional system has another drawback in that this system does not have a function of preliminarily preventing tape damage by detecting, when a cartridge is loaded, dew condensation when the tape is drawn out of the cartridge and before the tape is wound up on the
20 rotary head drum.

The present invention has been conceived in view of the problems existing in the related art, so as to provide a highly reliable tape drive apparatus by adding a new mechanism,
25 which is enabled to accurately detect dew condensation on a rotary head drum when dew condensation occurs thereon.

[0016]

As a result, according to a preferred embodiment of the
30 present invention, there is provided a tape drive apparatus, which is adapted so that a tape serving as a recording medium

is drawn out of a cartridge accommodating the tape, that the drawn tape is made to run in such a way as to be wound on a tape takeup reel provided in a tape drive apparatus body, and that recording and reproducing of a signal are performed by
5 winding the tape drawn out of the cartridge around a rotary head drum. Such tape drive apparatus comprises a prethreading mechanism for bringing the tape into slight contact with the rotary head drum before the tape is completely wound around the rotary head drum. In this
10 apparatus, dew condensation on the rotary head drum is detected by rotating the rotary head drum during a status in which the tape is brought by the prethreading mechanism into contact with the rotary head drum.

15 [0017]

In this case, when dew condensation occurs on the rotary head drum, increase in the friction between the rotary head drum and the tape results in variation in rotation of the rotary head drum. Dew condensation on the rotary head
20 drum is detected by detecting the variation in rotation of the rotary head drum.

Alternatively, dew condensation on the rotary head drum may be detected by detecting change in the tension of the
25 tape or rotation of a tape supply reel.

[0018]

Additionally, the tape drive apparatus according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention may be adapted
30 so that the tape is detached from the rotary head drum after the dew condensation on the rotary head drum is detected as

described above, and that the rotary head drum is rotated during this status. Thus, the drying of the rotary head drum is expedited.

5 The tape drive apparatus according to the present invention is adapted so that the prethreading mechanism brings tape into slight contact with the rotary head drum before the tape is completely wound around the rotary head drum, that then, during this status, the rotary head drum is
10 rotated thereby to detect dew condensation on the rotary head drum. Thus, when dew condensation occurs on the rotary head drum, this dew condensation can be directly detected. Therefore, as compared with the conventional indirect dew condensation detecting method using a dew condensation
15 sensor, accurate dew condensation detection is achieved in a short time. Additionally, the tape drive apparatus according to the present invention is also adapted so that the tape is detached from the rotary head drum after the dew condensation on the rotary drum head is detected, and that
20 during this status, the rotary head drum is rotated to thereby expedite drying of the rotary head drum. Thus, dew condensation on the rotary head drum can be eliminated in a short time. Consequently, the present invention provides a highly reliable tape drive apparatus enabled to prevent an
25 occurrence of a tape running failure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above and other features, objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the
30 following description of the exemplary preferred embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying

drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a plan view showing the configuration of a major section of a tape drive apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

5 FIG. 2 is a plan view showing a status in which a prethreading mechanism causes tape to be in contact with a rotary head drum, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

10 FIG. 3 is a plan view showing a status, in which a leader block is carried to a position where the leader block is wound up by a takeup reel, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

15 FIG. 4 is a plan view showing a status, in which tape is wound around a rotary head drum, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a plan view showing the configuration and an initial status of an operation of the prethreading mechanism, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

20 FIG. 6 is an explanatory view showing a continuation of the operation shown in FIG. 5;

FIG. 7 is an explanatory view showing a continuation of the operation shown in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is an explanatory view showing a continuation of the operation shown in FIG. 7;

25 FIG. 9 is an explanatory view showing a continuation of the operation shown in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is an explanatory view showing a continuation of the operation shown in FIG. 9;

30 FIG. 11 is a view showing the configuration of a system for detecting dew condensation on the rotary head drum of the tape drive apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of

the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a flowchart explaining a flow of an operation of the tape drive apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

5 FIG. 13 is a plan view showing another example of the configuration of the major section of the tape drive apparatus according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 14 is a plan view showing the configuration of a conventional tape drive apparatus;

10 FIG. 15 is a plan view showing the configuration of a major section of the conventional tape drive apparatus; and

FIG. 16 is a plan view showing a status, in which tape is wound around a rotary head drum, of the conventional tape drive apparatus.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019]

Hereinafter, preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail by referring to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 shows a tape drive apparatus as a preferred embodiment of the present invention. This tape drive apparatus is configured on a base of the configuration of the conventional tape drive apparatus, which are shown in FIGS. 14 to 16, by adding a prethreading mechanism 40 thereto as a new mechanism.

30 [0020]

This prethreading mechanism 40 brings the tape T into

slight contact with the rotary head drum 3 before the tape T is completely wound up around the rotary head drum 3.

FIG. 5 shows the configuration of this prethreading mechanism 40. The prethreading mechanism 40 is configured on the bottom surface of a supporting plate 41 that is fixed to an upper part of the tape drive apparatus. FIG. 5 shows only constituent components of this prethreading mechanism 40 by being selected from this embodiment. Incidentally, the supporting plate 41, on which this prethreading mechanism 40 is configured, may be constituted by the subplate 8 of the tape drive apparatus shown in FIG. 14.

[0021]

This prethreading mechanism 40 comprises a prethreading arm 42 for drawing the tape T out of a cartridge and for bringing the tape T into contact with the rotary head drum 3, a motor 48 serving as a drive source for this prethreading arm 42, a slide lever 49 for transmitting a driving force of this motor 48 to the prethreading arm 42, and two turning levers 54 and 58.

[0022]

The prethreading arm 42 is disposed at a place on a path, through which the tape T is carried by the carrying mechanism 7, so that this place is closer to a tape supply side than the rotary head drum 3, and that the prethreading arm 42 is turned at this place. This prethreading arm 42 is a folding two-stage arm, that is, consists of a first arm 42a and a second arm 42b. The first arm 42a is attached to the supporting plate 41 in such a way as to be able to turn at an

end thereof around a support shaft 43. A second arm 42b is turnably connected to a leading end of this first arm 42a by a connection shaft 44. A prethreading pin 45 for drawing the tape T out of the cartridge is provided at a leading end of the
5 second arm 42b. The second arm 42b is provided with abutting rollers 46 and 47 that respectively abut against contact pieces 61 and 62 (to be described later).

[0023]

10 The first arm 42a is always turned and biased by a return spring (not shown), as shown in FIG. 5, in such a way as to be returned to an initial position. The second arm 42b is enabled to turn between a folded position, which is shown in FIG. 5, and an extended position to which the second arm 42b
15 is turned 180° around the connection shaft 44 from the folded position. The second arm 42b is turned and biased by a toggle spring (not shown) toward the folded position and the extended position from the middle point between these two positions, which serves as a boundary therebetween. Incidentally, the
20 second arm 42b is held at the folded position in an initial status.

[0024]

25 A slide lever 49 for transmitting a driving force of the motor 48 to the prethreading arm 42 is slidably attached to the supporting plate 41 by supporting-pins 50a, 50b. This slide lever 49 is dynamically connected to the motor 48 through a gear mechanism 51. That is, the last gear 51a of the gear mechanism 51 is meshed with a rack section 52 of the slide
30 lever 49. Thus, the driving force of the motor 48 is transmitted to the slide lever 49, so that the slide lever 49

slides. A photosensor 53 detects a sliding position of the slide lever 49. According to this detection, an operation of the prethreading mechanism 40 is controlled.

5 [0025]

A member for transmitting an operating force of this slide lever 49 to the prethreading arm 42 comprises two turning levers, that is, a first turning lever 54 and a second turning lever 58.

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The first turning lever 54 is nearly L-shaped and attached to the supporting plate 41 in such a way as to be able to turn around a supporting shaft 55. A receiving pin 56 corresponding to an edge of the slide lever 49 is provided at an end section of the first turning lever 54. At the other end section of the first turning lever 54, a pressing roller 57 adapted to abut against and push an end section 58a of the second turning lever 58 is provided. The first turning lever 54 is turned and biased by a return spring (not shown) in such a manner as to return to an initial position (shown in the figure).

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[0026]

The second turning lever 58 is attached to the supporting plate 41 in such a way as to be able to turn around a supporting shaft 59. The end section 58a of the second turning lever 58 is pushed by the pressing roller 57 of the first turning lever 54, as will be described later. A cam edge section 58b is formed at the other end section of the second turning lever 58. This cam edge section 58b is made to abut against the receiving pin 60 provided in the first arm 42a of the prethreading arm 42. Similarly, the second turning lever 58 is

30

always turned and biased by a return spring (not shown) in such a way as to return to an initial position shown in the figure.

5 [0027]

Contact pieces 61 and 62 are provided at places, against which the abutting rollers 46 and 47 of the second arm 42b when the prethreading arm 42 is turned, on the supporting plate 41. When the abutting rollers 46 and 47 respectively
10 abut against the contact pieces 61 and 62, as will be described later, the second arm 42b is turned to the first arm 42a.

[0028]

Next, an operation of the prethreading mechanism 40
15 configured as described above is described hereinbelow.

When the motor 48 having been in an initial status shown in FIG. 5 is driven, the slide lever 49 slides leftwardly, as viewed in the figure. An edge of the slide lever 49 abuts
20 against and pushes the receiving pin 56 of the first turning lever 54. Thus, the first turning lever 54 is turned about the supporting shaft 33 counterclockwise, as viewed in FIG. 2. The pressing roller 57 of the first turning lever 54 abuts against and pushes the end section 58a of the second turning
25 lever 58 (see FIG. 6).

[0029]

Thus, the second turning lever 58 is turned about the supporting shaft 59, as viewed in the figure. The cam edge
30 section 58b of the second turning lever 58 pushes the receiving pin 69. Consequently, the first arm 42a of the prethreading

arm 42 is turned about the supporting shaft 43, as viewed in the figures (see FIG. 7 to FIG. 10).

[0030]

5 In the operation of turning the prethreading arm 42, first, the abutting roller 46 of the second arm 42b abuts against the contact piece 61, as shown in FIGS. 7 and 8. Thus, the second arm 42b is turned about the connection shaft 44 from the folded position to the extended position with respect
10 to the first arm 42a. Subsequently, as shown in FIG. 9, the abutting roller 47 abuts against the contact piece 62. Thus, the second arm 42b is turned still more. When turned thereto, the second arm 42b is automatically turned by a force of the toggle spring to the extended position. In a status in which
15 the prethreading arm 42 is turned to a final position, as shown in FIG. 10, the second arm 42b is completely turned to the extended position. Consequently, the prethreading arm 42 is brought into an extended status.

20 [0031]

 This prethreading mechanism 40 is adapted to operate when the tape T is drawn out of the cartridge 4 and carried by the carrying mechanism 7 to a predetermined position where the leader block 13 does not reach the tape takeup reel 6. As
25 described above, the prethreading arm 42 is turned, so that a prethreading pin 45 draws the tape T and brings the tape T into slight contact with the rotary head drum 3.

[0032]

30 FIG. 2 shows a status in which the tape T is put into slight contact with the rotary head drum 3 by the prethreading

mechanism 40. In the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment, dew condensation is detected by rotating the rotary head drum 3 during a status in which the tape T is in contact with the rotary head drum in this manner.

5

This dew-condensation detecting operation is continued until the leader block 13 reaches a position where the leader block is wound on the tape takeup reel 6. Only in the case that dew condensation is detected, the rotation of the rotary
10 head drum 3 is immediately stopped. Then, the apparatus performs an operation of returning the prethreading arm 42 to thereby return the leader block to the cartridge 4.

[0033]

15 The detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is performed as follows.

That is, in this case, the rotary head drum 3 is rotation-driven during a status, in which the tape T is in
20 contact with the rotary head drum 3 as described above, at a speed that is lower than a speed in the case of performing ordinary recording/reproducing of signals. At that time, in a case where dew condensation occurs on the rotary head drum 3, friction between the rotary head drum 3 and the tape T
25 increases. Thus, the rotary head drum 3 pulls the tape T. This results in variation in rotation of the rotary head drum 3. The tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment detects the variation in the rotation of the rotary head drum 3 by using a rotation detector provided in a drum motor. Consequently,
30 an occurrence of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is detected.

[0034]

Also, tension of the tape T is changed by the pulling of the tape T, which is caused by dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3. In the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment, dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 can be detected by using the tension regulator 30 to thereby detect change in the tension of the tape T. In this case, in the tension regulator 30, a detector is provided under the arm 32. This detector detects change of the arm 32, which is caused by change in tension of the tape T. Thus, dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is detected.

[0035]

The pulling of the tape, which is caused by dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3, results in a status in which the tape supply reel 5 provided in the cartridge 4 rotates.

In the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment, rotation of the tape supply reel 5 may be detected by a rotation detector provided in a reel motor. This also enables the detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3.

[0036]

FIG. 11 shows the configuration of a system for detecting dew condensation on the rotary head drum in the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment.

This system is controlled by a control section 70

constituted by a microprocessor. That is, the control section 70 controls an operation of the carrying mechanism 7 and activates the prethreading mechanism 40 according to position information sent from the carrying mechanism 7. Thus, the
5 control section 70 brings the tape into contact with the rotary head drum 3. During this status, the control section 70 controls and drives a drum motor 71 and causes the rotary head drum 3 to rotate.

10 [0037]

In this prethreading status, the control section 70 monitors a rotation detection signal sent from the drum motor 71 of the rotary head drum 3. When variation in the rotation of the rotary head drum 3 is caused by dew condensation on
15 the rotary head drum 3, the control section 70 decides that dew condensation occurs thereon.

Also, the control section 70 monitors a detection signal sent from the tension regulator 30. In the case where the
20 tension of the tape changes due to dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3, as described above, and that change of the arm of the tension regulator 30 is detected, the control section 70 decides that dew condensation occurs thereon.

25 Also, the control section 70 monitors a rotation detection signal sent from the reel motor 72 for the tape supply reel 5. In the case where the tape is pulled owing to dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 and that rotation of the tape supply reel 5, which is caused by pulling the tape due to dew
30 condensation on the rotary head drum 3, as described above, is detected, the control section 70 decides that dew condensation

occurs thereon.

[0038]

Incidentally, in the tape drive apparatus according to
5 this embodiment, it is sufficient for detecting dew condensation
to use at least one of the three dew condensation detecting
elements. However, combinations of these dew condensation
detecting elements enable more reliable detection of the dew
condensation.

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[0039]

FIG. 12 shows a flow of an operation of the tape drive
apparatus according to this embodiment.

15 That is, in the tape drive apparatus according to this
embodiment, first, the cartridge is mounted at a mounting
section of an apparatus body in step S1. Then, the carrying
mechanism 7 is activated and chucks the leader block provided
at a leading end of the tape T and carries the leader block 13 to
20 a predetermined position in step S2. Thus, the tape T is
drawn out of the tape supply reel 5 of the cartridge 4.

[0040]

When the leader block 13 is carried to the
25 predetermined position, the prethreading mechanism 40 is
activated in step S3. Thus, as shown in FIG. 2, the tape T is
drawn by the prethreading arm 42 and brought into contact
with the rotary head drum 3. Then, the rotary head drum 3
having been in this status is temporarily activated and caused
30 to rotate at low speed in step S4. Subsequently, the leader
block 13 is advanced to the tape takeup reel 6 in step S5.

Then, in step S6, the rotary head drum 3 is caused to rotate during a status in which the tape T is in contact with the rotary head drum 3. Thus, detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is performed, as described above.

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[0041]

When dew condensation is detected as a consequence, the rotation of the rotary head drum 3 is immediately stopped in step S7. Subsequently, the prethreading mechanism 40 is operated reverse to thereby return the prethreading arm 42 in step S8. Thus, the tape T is detached from the rotary head drum 3. Thereafter, the carrying mechanism 7 is operated reverse to thereby return the leader block 13 to the cartridge in step S9. Thus, the tape T is wound back to the cartridge 4.

15

[0042]

Then, the rotary head drum 3 having been in this status is activated and caused to rotate in step S10. In this case, the rotary head drum 3 is caused to rotate at a speed that is equal to or higher than a speed in the case of performing ordinal recording/reproducing of signals. Wind caused by the high-speed rotation of the rotary head drum 3 and heat from the drum motor expedite drying of the rotary head drum 3.

25 [0043]

After this drying operation is continuously performed for a predetermined period of time, the carrying mechanism 7 is activated again and the leader block 13 is carried to a predetermined position in step S2. Then, the prethreading mechanism 40 is activated in step S3. Thus, the tape T is put into contact with the rotary head drum 3. During such a

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status, the rotary head drum 3 is caused to rotate at low speed in step S4. Subsequently, the leader block 13 is advanced in step S5. Consequently, detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is performed again in step S6.

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[0044]

In the case where dew condensation is not detected as a result of this dew condensation detecting operation until the leader block 13 reaches the tape takeup reel 6 in step S11, the
10 tape takeup mechanism is then activated and the tape T is completely wound thereon in step S12.

[0045]

FIG. 4 shows a status in which the tape T is wound up
15 on the rotary head drum 3. In this status, the prethreading mechanism 40 completes the role thereof. Therefore, the prethreading arm 42 is returned to an initial position.

In the status in which the tape T is wound around the
20 rotary head drum 3, the tape takeup reel 6 is rotation-driven to thereby wind the tape T. Thus, the tape T runs, and at the same time, the rotary head drum 3 is rotation-driven. Consequently, signals are recorded on or reproduced from the tape T.

25

[0046]

Incidentally, in the aforementioned operation, a warning or alarm representing a dew condensation status may be indicated on the display section of the apparatus when dew
30 condensation on the rotary head drum 3 is detected. Additionally, the cartridge 4 may be forcibly ejected when dew

condensation on the rotary head drum is detected and the leader block 13 is returned to the cartridge 4.

[0047]

5 The tape drive apparatus, which is configured and operated according to this embodiment as described above, features that the tape T having been drawn out of the cartridge 4 is brought into slight contact with the rotary head drum 3 by the prethreading mechanism 40 before the tape is completely
10 wound around the rotary head drum 3, and that during such a status, the rotary head drum 3 is rotated thereby to detect dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3. This dew condensation detecting method enables direct detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3. Thus, as compared
15 with the conventional method for indirectly detecting dew condensation on the rotary head drum by using a dew condensation sensor, the method according to this embodiment enables quick and accurate detection of dew condensation. Especially, in the tape drive apparatus according to this
20 embodiment, detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum is performed midway through an operation of carrying the tape T, which has been drawn out of the cartridge 4, to the tape takeup reel 6. Consequently, detection of dew condensation can be achieved more quickly.

25

[0048]

 In the case of the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment, detection of dew condensation has three factors, that is, variation in the rotation of the rotary head drum,
30 change in the tension of tape, and the rotation of the tape supply reel. Therefore, more accurate detection of dew

condensation is enabled by performing the detection thereof by taking combinations of these factors into consideration.

[0049]

5 The tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment has a structure in which the prethreading arm 42 of the prethreading mechanism 40 is constituted by the folding two-stage arm including the arms 42a and 42b, and in which the tape T is put into contact with the rotary head drum 3 by
10 extending this prethreading arm 42. The prethreading arm 42 can be built compactly into a small space in the apparatus body. Therefore, this embodiment is advantageous in downsizing of the apparatus.

15 [0050]

 Additionally, the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment may be adapted so that the tape T is detached from the rotary head drum 3 after detection of dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3, and that during this
20 status, the rotary head drum 3 is rotated to thereby expedite the drying of the rotary head drum 3. Consequently, dew condensation on the rotary head drum can be eliminated quickly. Thus, stable tape running is enabled.

25 [0051]

 FIG. 13 shows a tape drive apparatus that is another embodiment of the present invention.

 The tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment
30 has a structure in which a tape winding member for winding the tape T around the rotary head drum 3 is also used as the

prethreading mechanism for detecting dew condensation on the rotary head drum 3. In this case, one of the tape winding members 16 and 17, that is, the tape winding member 16 placed at a tape supply side (that is, at an inlet port side) also
5 serves as a prethreading member.

[0052]

That is, the tape drive apparatus according to this embodiment is adapted so that when the leader block 13 is
10 carried to a predetermined position, first, the tape-supply-side tape winding member 16 moves to a place (which is the same place shown in FIG. 16) where the tape-supply-side tape winding member 16 can constitute a tape path to be employed in the case of performing ordinary recording/reproducing of
15 signals, that then, the tape winding member 16 brings the tape T into contact with the rotary head drum 3 at an angle whose range is half the range of a winding angle in the case of performing ordinary recording/reproducing of signals, and that the detection of dew condensation is performed by causing,
20 during this status, the rotary head drum 3 to rotate at low speed.

Thereafter, in this tape drive apparatus, the leader block 13 is carried to a position at which the tape T is wound on the
25 tape takeup reel 6. Subsequently, the tape-winding-side tape winding member 17 (that is, an outlet port side tape winding member 17) is moved, and then, the tape T is completely wound on the rotary head drum 3.

30 [0053]

Although the tape drive apparatus according to this

embodiment requires a relatively complex mechanism for moving each of the tape winding members 16 and 17, a prethreading mechanism 40 as shown in FIG. 5 may be omitted, thus the configuration of the apparatus being
5 simplified as a whole. Consequently, this embodiment is advantageous in promoting a downsizing of the apparatus.

[0054]

Although the preferred embodiments of the present
10 invention have been described above in their preferred forms with a certain degree of particularity, it should be understood that the present invention is not limited thereto and that needless to say, other various modifications, variations, combinations and subcombinations of such embodiments and
15 equivalents thereof may be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention.